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ABSTRACT

A study evaluated language needs, preparation, and screening among non-native-English-speaking U.S. Army officers and enlisted personnel, focusing primarily on the needs of officers. The purpose was to help determine the minimum competency levels needed on two measures of English proficiency. Evaluation questions guiding the study were: (1) What level of English language ability is needed for success as an officer or enlisted member? and (2) Are English screening and instruction adequate? Results from interviews with service members and their supervisors and supervisors' ratings of service members' job performance are reported. Some data are also drawn from English language tests used for screening. Results indicate that while non-native-English-speaking service members were relatively competent and well-educated in their native languages, some service members found English language deficiencies interfered with their job performance. Conversational skills, pronunciation, and the ability to understand accents, dialects, and colloquial expressions were seen as important, and adequate writing skills were found to be crucial for officers. Screening could be improved by focusing more on skills that are most difficult or most important for non-native English speakers. Increased opportunities to speak English within and outside the classroom and instruction in military document writing were found desirable. Specific recommendations are made. (MSE)

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English Language Needs and Preparation for Non-native English Speaking Army Personnel

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English Language Needs and Preparation for Non-native English Speaking Army Personnel

Introduction

Many non-native English speaking Army personnel have received their formal education in their native language and can be assumed to be literate in that language. But some of these may not have attained a similar level of literacy in English. How might this effect their overall job performance in the Army? What level of English literacy *is* necessary to function adequately in the Army, or to have successful Army careers? What should the minimum requirements for English proficiency be?

This paper discusses some of the findings from a study to evaluate the language needs, preparation, and screening among non-native English speaking U.S. Army officers and enlisted soldiers (Dean, R.A., Hoffman, L.M., and Hoffman, D.M., 1988). This was part of a larger project conducted by the American Institutes for Research to evaluate the Army's Basic Skills Education program for the U.S. Army Research Institute. Funding for the evaluation was provided by the Soldier Education Division, Department of the Army.

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to work toward determining what the minimum competency levels on two measures of English proficiency should be for Army personnel. The desired minimum competency levels would be those that excluded anyone with too little English to succeed, and admitted anyone whose English was sufficient. This evaluation began establishing a base of information that would support further work in setting appropriate test score standards. Two major evaluation questions that guided the study were: (1) What English language ability is needed for success as an officer or enlisted member? and (2) Is English language preparation (screening and instruction) adequate? The findings of two sources of data that addressed these questions are discussed: interviews with service members and their supervisors, and supervisors' ratings of their job performance.

Recent evaluations of the Army's English as a Second Language (ESL) programs had focused on English training for enlisted personnel (Hahn et al, 1986; Holland et al, 1982a, 1982b; Redish, 1982; Rosenbaum et al, 1984; Stoddart, 1982). Thus, while this

study included both officers and enlisted members, the primary focus of the study was on English preparation and screening for officers.

First, a discussion of the need for ESL instruction is presented, followed by an overview of Army ESL programs and screening.

The need for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the Army

Demographic projections indicate that while the number of people between the ages of 18 to 20 will decrease in the general population through the year 2000, the number of those in this age group will increase within minority populations, particularly within Hispanic groups (Berry, Oxford-Carpenter, Gendell, & Wheatley, 1985). This change in population characteristics will mean that the Army will most likely be recruiting a greater proportion of the minority, non-native English speaking population to meet its manpower needs. In addition, the Army needs speakers of other languages, especially among its officers. As possessing adequate English skills is a prerequisite for performing jobs and for being successful in the Army, these and other factors argue that ESL instruction will remain an important part of the Army's Basic Skills Education Program (BSEP).

The Army's ESL Programs - Past and Present

Currently, Most non-native English speaking Army personnel are Spanish speaking, and the largest number of non-native English speaking service members come from Puerto Rico. The Army's ESL programs primarily serve this population.

ESL instruction has been a part of the Army's Basic Skills Education Program (BSEP) since 1967, when it implemented a six-week ESL program as part of training for enlisted service members (Hahn et al; 1986). The Army has continued to offer ESL instruction through different kinds of programs over the years. English training has been provided at both centralized and decentralized locations. The instructional materials in these programs have ranged from texts focusing on general English proficiency to more Army related materials.

Current ESL programs

The Army now offers ESL instruction to service members through three programs: An intensive residential English training course for officers and enlisted personnel at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas; English instruction for ROTC cadets at University campuses in Puerto Rico; and an intensive English language training program for Puerto Rican National Guard enlistees at the Puerto Rican National Guard Language Center (PRARNG-LC) at Fort Allen in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. The information about the programs reported below is derived from on-site observations and discussions with staff members.

DLIELC. The Defense Language Institute English Language Center conducts an intensive residential English training course for commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers who have not yet met minimum requirements in English language proficiency needed to begin their training assignments.

Testing. At DLIELC and in the other programs described below, two measures are used to assess the English language proficiency of Army personnel and to help determine whether they need English instruction: the English Comprehension Level Test (ECLT) and the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The ECLT is a standardized proficiency test with 120 items: 75 listening comprehension items (presented on tape), and 45 reading comprehension items (written). The OPI is an extended interview used by the Army to measure speaking and listening ability. It is conducted by two qualified Oral Proficiency Interviewers, and takes approximately one hour to administer. During the interview, students are evaluated and rated on a comprehensive set of dimensions of language use - pronunciation, fluency, sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge, grammar, vocabulary, and "language tasks" (asking questions, making requests, stating opinions, and so on). A scale of 0 to 5 is used to rate interviewees on these dimensions. A rating of "0" indicates no knowledge of the language; a rating of "5" would be given to a native speaker.

Overview of the program. Enlisted recruits with ECLT scores of less than 70 are sent to DLIELC for a maximum of 24 weeks of English language training prior to attending Basic Combat Training. The program for enlisted personnel began in September 1985. Enlisted soldiers are housed in one of three squadrons at Lackland Air Force Base, apart from the allied military personnel and from native English speaking Air Force personnel. They attend five hours of English classes and one hour of language lab per day. In addition, enlisted members receive physical training and instruction in

military subjects. They receive two hours of supervised study hall in the afternoon, and are allowed one hour of "personal time" per day. To graduate from DLIELC, enlisted members must achieve two ECLT scores of 70 and an OPI rating of 1+/1 (listening and speaking subtests, respectively). If enlisted soldiers attain two ECLT scores of 70 but have not received the OPI rating of 1+/1 by their scheduled graduation date, they are still sent on to Basic Combat Training. Soldiers who do not achieve the ECLT requirement are discharged from the Army.

DLIELC has provided English instruction for Puerto Rican commissioned officers since 1983. Officers who score at least 80 but less than 90 on the ECLT are sent to DLIELC for 16 weeks before going to their Branch Officer Basic Course.[1] Like enlisted personnel, officers receive five hours of English instruction and one hour of language lab per day. To graduate from DLIELC with a diploma, officers must attain a score of 90 on the ECLT and an OPI rating of 2+/2. To graduate with a certificate, they are only required to earn an ECLT score of between 80 and 90 and an OPI rating of 2/2. In those rare cases in which an officer does not meet the requirements for graduation after 16 weeks of instruction, an extension can be requested.

Curriculum. The curriculum for enlisted personnel is the American Language Course (ALC), a general English curriculum using the audio-lingual approach to language teaching. The ALC was developed in 1956 for allied military personnel, and additional components were developed in 1966 and at later dates. The curriculum for officers combines the ALC with commercial texts for teaching writing, grammar, and conversation. The officer's curriculum was developed in 1986 and has received minor revisions since that time. According to one DLIELC staff member, more writing was introduced into the curriculum in 1988 to reflect new Army requirements. During the evaluation period, DLIELC was also revising the ALC to reflect current research on language learning and teaching.

The University of Puerto Rico. ESL instruction is also provided for ROTC cadets at university campuses through DLIELC's Language Training Detachment at the University of Puerto Rico. ROTC cadets who need to improve their English enroll in English classes in addition to their military science classes. English classes are offered at

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1. At Branch Officer Basic Course, officers receive training in their specific fields before beginning their Army jobs.

basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. An elective writing class is also available at some ROTC campuses. Generally, the program of instruction is based on the ALC. An intensive Summer English Program is also offered on some university campuses.

Testing. Cadets are tested on the ECLT at the beginning of each semester throughout their ROTC careers. The ECLT cut-off scores are used as one of the criteria for selecting cadets for attendance at Basic Camp and Advanced Camp[2], for contracting, and for commissioning. Officers must receive an ECLT score of 80 to be commissioned. The OPI is administered in the second semester of the cadet's senior year. While the OPI is one determinant of whether an officer is sent to DLIELC, it is not a criterion for commissioning. If it is determined that officers need additional English language training before attending Branch Officer Basic Course, officers are sent to DLIELC after commissioning. Most of those sent to DLIELC have attained an ECLT score of less than 90 and an OPI rating of less than 2+/2.

The Puerto Rican Army National Guard-Language Center. The Puerto Rican Army National Guard-Language Center (PRARNG-LC) offers intensive resident ESL instruction to Puerto Rican National Guard recruits who have not met the minimum requirements to enter Basic Combat Training in the continental U.S. This school was established in 1976 and provides elementary and intermediate instruction to PRARNG trainees. Puerto Rican National Guard enlistees are sent to PRARNG if they score less than 70 on the ECLT when they are tested at recruiting centers. The instructional program at PRARNG-LC includes six hours of English classes and lab per day, plus one hour each for math, military subjects, and physical training. Students have one hour of study period for four evenings a week, and one hour a week of organized sports. The English language curriculum is the ALC, as in other programs. The English instructors, who are primarily warrant officers, are certified by DLIELC and the Department of Education of Puerto Rico.

In all programs, students are required to speak only English outside of class. However, evaluators noted that this requirement was enforced to varying degrees in each of the program locations visited.

The sections below describe two sources of data that were collected for this study, and present findings, conclusions and recommendations.

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2. These are training camps that cadets must attend as part of their ROTC instructional program.

Sources of Data

Interviews. We drew our sample of non-native speakers for this evaluation from data bases provided by two U.S. Army agencies: The Defense Language Institute (DLI), and the Personnel Information Systems Command (PERSINSCOM). Our sample of officers included all those who were commissioned, appointed, or assigned to active duty in Puerto Rico on or after 1 January 1983; and those who had attended DLIELC on or after 1 January 1983. Our sample of enlisted members included all those on active duty who had attended DLIELC from January 1985 to February 1988.

The records from PERSINSCOM and DLIELC helped us to identify the locations of officers and enlisted personnel and to set up interviews at Army installations. We selected sites that had the largest numbers of potential interviewees, and those that we planned to visit for other evaluation activities. In on-site interviews at eight Army posts and at DLIELC, we asked service members about the adequacy of their English language preparation and screening. At Army posts, whenever possible, we also talked with their supervisors to find out about their experiences working with non-native English speaking Army personnel.

Protocols containing general questions were used to guide the interviews. Non-native English speaking service members were asked about their experiences learning and using English prior to joining and during their Army careers, whether they felt their English was sufficient to perform in their current jobs, and in what areas they felt they needed to improve. Supervisors were asked similar questions about their experiences working with non-native English speaking Puerto Rican Army personnel. Each interview lasted from 30 minutes to one hour, depending on the time available.

Supervisors' Ratings. We developed two Language Activity Rating forms in which supervisors were to rate service members on a number of tasks that involved using English communication skills. We developed the Language Activity Rating for Officers by analyzing the Military Qualification Standards (MOS) II Manual of Common Tasks, and identifying those tasks that involved using speaking, reading, or writing English. The tasks compiled in this manual include skills and knowledge that officers are trained in during their Branch Officer Basic Course, and which they are required to know as

lieutenants. To further develop and refine the instrument, we organized sessions with groups of officers in the field. These officers ranked the tasks on their importance for the overall performance of officers, and indicated how frequently the tasks were performed. We also pilot tested the instrument by having officers complete the instrument as if they were ranking actual subordinates on these tasks. We used similar procedures for developing the Language Activity Rating for Enlisted Personnel. In developing this instrument, we analyzed the Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks, Skill Levels I and II, and pilot tested the form with groups of non-commissioned officers. The Soldiers' Manual includes tasks that all soldiers are required to know by the end of Basic Combat Training, and some tasks that soldiers should know by the end of their two-year tour of duty. Most supervisors completed the Language Activity Rating during the interviews; some returned the completed forms by mail after the interview.

Findings

Findings from interviews and supervisors' ratings are presented below. Views on the preparation and screening for officers are first discussed, followed by interview comments on the English preparation for enlisted members.

Preparation and Screening for Officers

Interview Findings

Background characteristics. We spoke with 45 officers and 22 of their supervisors. As Table 1 illustrates, 34 officers were interviewed at Army posts, and 11 officers were at DLIELC. About half (16) of those interviewed at Army posts had gone to DLIELC. Almost half of the officers had lived in the continental U.S. at some time before joining the Army. Most of the officers were First Lieutenants (14), Second Lieutenants (15), or Captains (11). None had a rank higher than Captain. They were most likely to have been commissioned through ROTC in Puerto Rico (36), while nine had received commissions or appointments through other sources (Warrant Officer School, Officer Candidate School, nursing or medical school, etc.). Finally, almost one-half of the officers had been on active duty as officers from one to 3.9 years, and over half of the officers had four or more years of combined officer and enlisted military service.

Experiences learning English. Several interviewees cited experiences in which they

had an opportunity to learn English before becoming officers. Seven had gone to private schools in Puerto Rico where all instruction was in English, but most (20) mentioned having had English courses in public schools and in college in Puerto Rico. Those who had not attended private schools generally agreed that their English classes in elementary and high school were not very helpful, because they did not provide many opportunities to speak English. About one-fourth of the officers (10) said that living in the U.S. had helped them learn the language. Some of the other sources for learning English were: attending college, learning from English speaking friends or relatives, and reading books.

Important English Skills. About three-fourths of the officers at Army posts commented on the importance of English to their jobs and for success as an officer. Supervisors and officers generally agreed that the ability to communicate effectively in English was crucial to the success of an officer. About one-third of the officers said that English proficiency was especially important for evaluations and promotions.

Many officers viewed writing as crucial to their careers, since those who make career decisions are often likely to know officers through their written work. About three fourths of the supervisors interviewed (15) also stressed the importance of good writing and speaking skills. At least seven supervisors said that writing was important because officers are often evaluated on the quality of their writing.

One officer said that writing was most essential in his job, and that it would become increasingly important as he progressed in his Army career. The most frequently cited kinds of documents that officers needed to write were Enlisted Evaluation Reports (EERs), Officer Evaluation Reports (OERs), award recommendations, and other reports.

Officers' Experiences at DLIELC. The 27 officers who had attended DLIELC told us about their experiences with the program. About half of these officers (13) said that they liked DLIELC in general. Most (22) commented on areas that might be improved.

Among the positive comments about the program were that it provided a good opportunity to get used to hearing or speaking English. It also helped officers gain confidence in using the language, to overcome cultural differences, and to adjust to the military environment.

Nine interviewees who had attended DLIELC felt that, overall, the instruction was not challenging enough. Many of these said that they had received similar English instruction in high school. Those who had taken English in ROTC had used the same textbooks as those used at DLIELC.

Eleven officers felt that opportunities to speak English were greatly limited at DLIELC, both inside and outside of class, partly due to the fact that Spanish speakers were segregated from native English speakers on base. Four officers felt that the school should focus more on teaching pronunciation. Five officers suggested that DLIELC offer more writing instruction. Officers in the field said that they needed more preparation in writing documents that were required at Branch Officer Basic Course and at their jobs, such as letters, reports, award recommendations, Disposition Forms, memos, and so on.

Adequacy of English Skills. Most officers at Army posts (29) commented on whether they felt that their English was adequate to perform their jobs. All felt that their English was sufficient, although many of the interviewees (23) said they wanted to improve their English in at least one area.

Officers most frequently said that they wanted to improve their writing (10). One officer asserted that poor writing could be a potential barrier to progress in his career, and another felt that she could write well enough for the demands of her current rank, but that she would need to work on her written skills in order to move up.

Officers also frequently mentioned wanting to improve their pronunciation or accent (10). Most of these officers were concerned that communication problems related to accents would interfere with getting good jobs in the Army or with their careers. One officer, a doctor who was fluent with only a slight accent, said that some of his patients had requested to be treated by someone else; he felt this was because he did not speak English like a native speaker. Ten officers said they had been made fun of, or that they believed their intelligence or competence was overlooked if they had an accent or other problems with English. One felt that she was the last choice for some jobs because of her level of English ability. She saw this as a vicious circle -- if she was not given a chance to show what she could do, how could she improve? These feelings were reflected in the comment of a supervisor who felt that if an officer was not proficient in English, it might appear that the officer was not bright, and "it could be a serious setback."

Six officers at Army posts said they were being or had gotten marked down in communication skills on their evaluations at some point in their Army careers. Two of these said that the evaluations did not adequately reflect their competence in English or in their jobs. One of them generally felt that the OER was too subjective; the other reported that he was put in a branch for which he was unprepared, so he stopped talking, and his supervisor mistook this behavior for problems with English. Another felt that the "2s" he had received on earlier evaluations contributed to his current ineligibility for extending his contract.

Supervisors generally felt that Puerto Ricans were highly motivated, and that the skills of non-native English speaking officers were adequate. Some agreed with officers, however, that they needed to improve their writing skills (6), and that having pronunciation problems or an accent might hinder an officer's career (5). Three supervisors noted that some non-native English speaking officers had problems with confidence, which might inhibit their ability to lead or to express themselves effectively. Three supervisors said that they had worked with officers whom they felt had inadequate training in English before reaching their training or job assignments. Three others said that Puerto Rican officers sometimes had problems with adapting to Army life and mainstream American culture.

Appropriateness of the ECLT and OPI as Screening Measures. Almost half of the officers (22) commented on the adequacy of the ECLT and the OPI for assessing their English language proficiency. Their supervisors did not comment on these screening measures.

Eighteen officers commented on the ECLT. While one officer said that the ECLT helped to improve his listening skills, most of the officers were critical of the test. Eight of the interviewees felt that it did not assess one's ability to communicate in English, and a few said that the pressure to increase their ECLT score detracted somewhat from their real goal of learning to speak and use English correctly. Officers agreed that the English of non-native speakers needed to be assessed, but many felt that a test of English proficiency primarily should measure speaking and writing skills, as these were the abilities they needed and used in their jobs. According to one officer, "it is possible to get a good score on the ECLT, but your English may not be good enough in speaking . . . it's just a test of being a good student . . . ."

Only four officers commented on the OPI. One said that the interview made her nervous. The others felt that doing well at the higher levels of the OPI depended to some degree on a knowledge of current events, not on one's actual English language proficiency.

Improving Officers' Chances for Success. While there was wide agreement that it was the individual's responsibility to "improve himself," officers made suggestions about how the Army could help, such as emphasizing more instruction in pronunciation and writing skills (9), offering cultural orientation programs for Puerto Ricans (2), and promoting good officers to higher positions to serve as mentors for other Puerto Rican Army personnel (1). Two supervisors also recommended offering better preparation in pronunciation skills, and four supervisors felt that officers should have a good command of writing skills before beginning their assignments.

Four officers and at least seven supervisors stressed the importance of providing all English preparation before officers reached their first duty assignments; a few felt that officers should not even be allowed to go to Advanced Camp or to be commissioned unless they had a high level of English proficiency. On the other hand, two officers and three supervisors said that officers should have the opportunity to receive more advanced English instruction after they began their jobs, and one suggested that

instructors be more aware that non-native English speakers might need extra help at Branch Officer Basic Course.

Findings from Language Activity Ratings

Twenty supervisors completed the Language Activity Rating in which they rated the performance of 21 officers on common tasks that involve using English. This discussion focuses only on those tasks on which at least eleven officers were rated. Only 45 of the 83 tasks met this criterion. This may be due to the fact that many of the tasks appeared to be performed more frequently by officers in Combat Arms[3], and three fourths of the officers in this study worked in other types of jobs.

Tables 2 through 4 give detailed results of the supervisors' ratings. Table 2 shows that at least 47 percent of the officers received ratings of "better than most" on eight of the 13 reading and writing tasks, whereas 46 percent or more officers were rated "better than most" on only three of the reading and writing tasks, as indicated in Table 3. Finally, at least 85 percent of the officers observed performed adequately or better on the reading tasks listed in Table 4, and between 43 and 57 percent of the officers performed "better than most" on each.

Supervisor's ratings of the performance of a smaller sample of officers complemented interviewees' comments about English skills in which officers needed better preparation. While the ratings indicated that these officers generally performed adequately on the most frequently performed common tasks, they did somewhat better at the reading and writing tasks than at the speaking and listening tasks. Also, officers performed better at reading-only tasks than at any of the other tasks involving English skills.

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[3]. This is a category of jobs in the Army.

Preparation and Screening for Enlisted Members

Interview Findings

We interviewed 27 enlisted members; 22 at Army posts, and five at DLIELC. We also talked with 17 of their supervisors. As shown in Table 5, over 60 percent of those at Army posts had been in the Army from one to 2.9 years. One had six years of service. Finally, this group tended to have a higher level of education than the Army's minimum requirement of a high school diploma. Almost two-thirds of the soldiers (17) reported having at least some college education in Puerto Rico.

Important English Skills. Ten of seventeen enlisted soldiers and five supervisors said that enlisted members primarily needed to speak and understand English in their jobs. Four enlisted soldiers and three supervisors felt that writing was also important. One supervisor felt that writing skills became more important as enlisted personnel moved up to higher ranks. Three soldiers said they needed to read technical manuals and other documents, while only one supervisor cited writing as important for enlisted members.

Enlisted soldiers' experiences at DLIELC. All of the enlisted members had attended DLIELC. Almost half of the soldiers (13) said that it had helped them to learn English, and, as with officers, they viewed the program as a place to adjust to the Army and get accustomed to using English. However, fourteen of the interviewees felt, as officers had, that there were few opportunities to speak English outside of class, and at least six said that they needed to speak more English in class. Many felt they would learn English more quickly if Spanish speakers were not kept together as a group. Four felt that the classes were not challenging enough. Three of these wanted to focus less on doing exercises in grammar and vocabulary.

Adequacy of English. As with officers, while enlisted members generally felt that their English was adequate and had improved over time (20), seventeen wanted to improve their English in some areas. According to one, his supervisor had said to him, "You're really smart, you're on top of everyone for promotion except for English, so you need classes." Only one soldier wanted to improve his writing skills, while several said they needed to improve their oral communication skills. Four of these expressed a desire to get rid of their accent or to improve their pronunciation. Over one-fourth (7)

of the soldiers said that they had difficulties understanding American slang or the speech of English speakers with non-standard or regional accents.

More than half of the soldiers (15) said that critical times for learning English were at Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training[4], and at their first assignments. Many reported making large gains in English during training, but these were also environments in which some soldiers had real difficulties with the language. For example, eight soldiers said that they managed to get through Basic Combat Training, but did not feel sufficiently prepared in English for this experience. A typical comment from this group was, "When I finished DLIELC I didn't know enough vocabulary. [AT Basic Combat Training] I understood only sometimes. [If] I saw everybody running I ran too."

About one-third (8) said that a fear of being ridiculed sometimes inhibited them from speaking English. One soldier asserted that she had overcome this fear: "I was scared when I first got here because people laughed at me, but I got over it."

Officers and supervisors who commented on the English preparation of enlisted members generally felt that Puerto Rican soldiers were highly motivated and performed as well as or better than other enlisted personnel. They felt that the English of those they supervised was currently adequate and had improved over time. However, about one-third of these interviewees also felt that overall, enlisted soldiers were not adequately prepared in English before reaching their posts.

One officer noted that as an enlisted man himself, he had just gotten by with the English he knew. Referring to Puerto Rican soldiers he had observed at Basic Combat Training and to his own experience, he said, "They're just imitating others.... I see enlisted men crying - they can't take it. They're pushing the ground [doing pushups as discipline] a few hundred times a day being punished by their sergeants for being bad soldiers when they're not, they're good soldiers, they just can't understand English." Another officer said, "I don't know how [some soldiers] get here from DLIELC, because they can't speak English. [The main problem is that] they can't understand their sergeants. And American sergeants don't understand Puerto Ricans ...."

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[4]. At Advanced Individual Training, enlisted soldiers receive training for their specific jobs.

Appropriateness of the ECLT and OPI. While only one soldier commented on the OPI, saying that the interview made him nervous, about half of the soldiers (13) commented on the ECLT. Offering comments similar to those of officers, most indicated that the ECLT did not adequately measure their ability to speak and use English. Seven soldiers felt that those who had trouble speaking and understanding English could still pass the test. According to one, "I know everything about grammar. I can pass perfectly. Listening I can pass. It doesn't mean I know English." One of the officers also felt that enlisted members could pass the ECLT without much difficulty; what they really needed was a test of conversational English. Two enlisted soldiers also said that those who spoke adequate English might not achieve the ECLT score needed to graduate from DLIELC.

Three soldiers expressed dissatisfaction with the listening portion of the test. One had trouble understanding because of the poor quality of the equipment; another said the test made him nervous; the third said that if he missed one word of a question he could miss the entire question.

Improving enlisted soldiers' chances for success. Five soldiers and eight supervisors suggested that the Army offer more opportunities for enlisted members to take more formal English instruction on post. Two supervisors said that enlisted soldiers should get more formal instruction in pronunciation skills, and two soldiers felt that English instruction should be more advanced than what was currently available. Officers also noted that more "good" soldiers might be retained it both oral and written evaluations could take into account that some non-native English speakers are still acquiring English skills during the early stages of their careers. Two soldiers and one of the officers suggested that the Army provide formal opportunities for people from Puerto Rico and the continental United States to learn about each other.

Eight supervisors and officers felt that the standards for English language proficiency of enlisted personnel were not high enough, and that enlistees were not adequately trained in English before reaching their first jobs in the Army. They stressed the importance of providing sufficient preparation in English before soldiers reached their posts. According to one of the officers, "there should be more training before it's too late, before they come to Basic Combat Training or Advanced Individual Training. [We] shouldn't wait until they fail."

While one supervisor commented that the presence of Spanish speaking soldiers detracted from a sense of unity in the Army, two felt that the Army should recognize the value of bilinguals in the Armed Forces. One of these said that the Army should employ more non-native English speakers as interpreters.

Findings from Language Activity Ratings

Supervisors' ratings of a small sample of soldiers supported the interview data. Ten supervisors completed the Language Activity Rating in which they rated the performance of 11 enlisted personnel. This discussion excludes five tasks because fewer than six supervisors reported observing the soldier carry them out.

Tables 6 through 8 provide detailed results of the supervisors' ratings. Table 6 shows supervisors' ratings of soldiers on oral communication tasks. According to these ratings, soldiers were somewhat better at understanding English than at tasks involving speaking English. While over one-third of the soldiers were rated as "better than most" on following oral instructions (item 40), over one third were rated as not performing as well as most soldiers on tasks involving speaking and being understood (items 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 36). At least 60 percent were rating as performing "as well as most" or better on oral communication, and more (at least 80 %) were rated this way on reading and writing tasks, as shown in Table 7. Finally, the ratings in Table 8 indicate that over half of the soldiers performed at least as well as most soldiers in overall job performance and communicative competence.

Overall, the ratings indicate that these soldiers performed somewhat better on reading and writing tasks than on oral communication tasks. They also tended to do better at following oral and written instructions than at performing other tasks requiring English skills. Finally, producing clear, understandable English was more difficult for some soldiers than listening to and understanding English.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The two major evaluation questions that guided the evaluation were: (1) What English language ability is needed for success as an officer or enlisted member? and (2) Is English language preparation adequate? General findings and conclusions that relate to these questions, based on interviews and supervisors' ratings, are presented below. These are followed by recommendations for administrators and others who are involved in implementing English training programs for non-native English speaking Army personnel.

What English Language Ability is Needed for Success as an Officer or Enlisted Member?

Information from interviews and supervisors' ratings showed that while non-native English speaking service members were relatively competent and well-educated in their native language, some found that deficiencies in English ability interfered with their overall job performance. There was general agreement that English proficiency was crucial for the success of non-native English speaking service members.

Especially important for officers and enlisted members were conversational skills; it was believed by those in the evaluation that correct pronunciation was important for both groups, and that English pronunciation was often difficult for non-native English speakers. Many non-native speakers also indicated that they had problems understanding different American accents or dialects, as well as understanding some of the colloquial English used in the Army.

Having adequate writing skills was viewed as critical for officers. Officers and their supervisors agreed that officers could benefit from better preparation in writing the kinds of documents required in their jobs, such as performance evaluations, awards, and other reports.

The knowledge of English and even the ability to speak it were felt by some Army personnel to be insufficient to bring about communication. Other factors that appeared to inhibit some non-native speakers' ability to communicate were a lack of confidence and a fear of being laughed at because of their English. This concern was felt especially by enlisted personnel. Thus, having the confidence to risk speaking English

in different situations, especially when doing so might elicit negative reactions, was viewed as important.

Is English Language Preparation and Screening adequate?

Interview data indicated that screening could be improved by focusing on skills that were the most difficult or most important for these non-native English speakers. Also, interviewees familiar with the ECLT felt that it did not sufficiently assess the English skills that non-native speakers needed to know to succeed in the Army. The ECLT may measure important skills, but the test does not measure several other abilities (e.g., writing, use of standard pronunciation) that were felt to be crucial.

Interviewees felt that English preparation could be improved by increasing classroom opportunities to speak the kind of English needed in real life situations, and by placing students in environments in which they used only English and had more contact with native English speaking people. Officers emphasized the importance of instruction in writing military documents. They also felt that English instruction should be made widely available to cadets and officers.

Findings also indicated that, while non-native speakers entering the Army should meet minimum standards in the English skills that are important to them, they would also benefit from opportunities to improve their English skills once they become active in the Army. Interviewees felt that the English of non-native speakers was also likely to improve over time spent in the Army, and that opportunities to receive additional English instruction on post could help to bring about this improvement. Finally, some officers and supervisors in this study asserted that the Army had a relatively untapped resource in its Spanish speaking officers; these Army personnel could be placed in positions that took advantage of their Spanish skills.

Recommendations

The findings from the two sources of data discussed in this paper support a number of recommendations for English language preparation and screening. First, program administrators might consider whether current English preparation for non-native English speakers adequately addresses the skills non-native speakers said they needed in their jobs. Some specific recommendations for improving English preparation are listed below:

- Increase the amount of English instruction available for ROTC cadets.
- Allow more opportunities for non-native English speaking personnel to practice speaking English, and to use the language for communicative purposes.
- Offer non-native English speaking officers more formal instruction in writing military documents.
- Offer English instruction in environments where students have the opportunity to speak English at all times.
- More widely address cross-cultural issues as they relate to Army life in English classrooms.

Second, before attempting to answer the question of whether the standards set on the ECLT or the OPI are appropriate, program administrators might first examine what English skills are related to success in the Army, and whether the tests measure these skills.

While the ECLT may be successful at screening for certain English skills, it does not appear to assess those skills that Army personnel generally said they found difficult or that they needed. The OPI, on the other hand, is intended to test conversational English, one of the skills service members said they needed. The OPI might serve as better screening device, however, if it required students to listen to and use more of the language that they might need in real life military situations. The ECLT could also screen Army personnel better if it required students to listen to natural conversation, and could also have more relevance if it included conversations from Army contexts. Finally, neither test assesses proficiency in the writing skills officers said they needed, so a writing component could be added to the screening process for officers.

really needed was a test of conversational English. Two enlisted soldiers also said that those who spoke adequate English might not achieve the ECLT score needed to graduate from DLIELC.

Three soldiers expressed dissatisfaction with the listening portion of the test. One had trouble understanding because of the poor quality of the equipment; another said the test made him nervous; the third said that if he missed one word of a question he could miss the entire question.

Improving enlisted soldiers' chances for success. Five soldiers and eight supervisors suggested that the Army offer more opportunities for enlisted members to take more formal English instruction on post. Two supervisors said that enlisted soldiers should get more formal instruction in pronunciation skills, and two soldiers felt that English instruction should be more advanced than what was currently available. Officers also noted that more "good" soldiers might be retained it both oral and written evaluations could take into account that some non-native English speakers are still acquiring English skills during the early stages of their careers. Two soldiers and one of the officers suggested that the Army provide formal opportunities for people from Puerto Rico and the continental United States to learn about each other.

Eight supervisors and officers felt that the standards for English language proficiency of enlisted personnel were not high enough, and that enlistees were not adequately trained in English before reaching their first jobs in the Army. They stressed the importance of providing sufficient preparation in English before soldiers reached their posts. According to one of the officers, "there should be more training before it's too late, before they come to Basic Combat Training or Advanced Individual Training. [We] shouldn't wait until they fail."

While one supervisor commented that the presence of Spanish speaking soldiers detracted from a sense of unity in the Army, two felt that the Army should recognize the value of bilinguals in the Armed Forces. One of these said that the Army should employ more non-native English speakers as interpreters.

Table 6. Oral Communication Tasks (N=11)

Task or Skill	Number Observed No.	Pct.	Better than most soldiers No.	Pct.*	As well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Not as well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Performs inadequately No.	Pct.
Speech Characteristics										
1. Speaks in a clear voice	11	100.0	--	--	6	55.0	4	36.0	1	9.0
2. Speaks at a volume appropriate for situation	11	100.0	1	9.0	7	64.0	3	27.0	--	--
3. Uses proper pronunciation	8	73.0	--	--	5	63.0	2	25.0	1	13.0
4. Overall speech quality	11	100.0	--	--	7	64.0	4	36.0	--	--
Giving Explanations										
5. Explains or justifies a choice if asked to	8	73.0	--	--	7	88.0	1	13.0	--	--
6. Explains how to perform a task to a supervisor	10	91.0	--	--	9	90.0	1	10.0	--	--
7. Explains an hypothetical course of action; i.e., what he or she would so given certain circumstances	10	91.0	--	--	6	55.0	4	36.0	--	--
8. Explains in a logical, clear, consistent, and forthright manner	11	100.0	--	--	7	64.0	4	36.0	--	--
Reporting to Supervisor										
9. Reports problems or malfunctions of materials to appropriate personnel	11	100.0	1	9.0	8	73.0	2	18.0	--	--
10. Reports on-duty observations to proper personnel	10	91.0	1	9.0	5	50.0	4	40.0	--	--
11. Reports completion of job tasks and readiness to begin another task	11	100.0	1	9.0	7	64.0	3	27.0	--	--
Responding to Commands, Orders, Questions										
12. Clarifies unclear orders by repeating what he or she believes to be the correct order	11	100.0	1	9.0	8	73.0	1	9.0	1	9.0
13. States disagreement with order if necessary	9	82.0	--	--	6	67.0	3	33.0	--	--
14. Understands supervisor's commands, orders, or instructions	11	100.0	1	9.0	9	82.0	1	9.0	--	--
15. Understands job-content related questions and instructions	11	100.0	1	9.0	7	64.0	2	18.0	1	9.0

*Percentages based on number of soldiers rated for task.

Table 6. (Cont.) Oral Communication Tasks (N=11)

Task or Skill	Number Observed No.	Pct.	Better than most soldiers No.	Pct.*	As well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Not as well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Performs inadequately No.	Pct.
Issuing and Responding to Warnings										
16. Warns or informs nearby personnel of danger	8	73.0	--	--	7	88.0	1	13.0	--	--
17. Understands and reacts appropriately to warnings issued by others	10	91.0	1	10.0	9	90.0	--	--	--	--
Supervising Others (Skill Level II tasks)										
27. Requests needed assistance or information	7	64.0	2	29.0	4	57.0	1	14.0	--	--
General Communicative Competence										
31. Communicates with fellow soldiers on the job or in training	11	100.0	2	18.0	8	73.0	1	9.0	--	--
32. Asks questions for information or clarification when necessary	11	100.0	2	18.0	8	73.0	1	9.0	--	--
33. Identifies materials or objects used on the job	10	91.0	2	20.0	8	80.0	--	--	--	--
34. Engages in job-task related conversation when appropriate	10	91.0	2	20.0	7	70.0	1	100.0	--	--
35. Makes requests when necessary according to protocol	7	64.0	--	--	6	86.0	1	14.0	--	--
36. Is understood by others	11	100.0	--	--	7	64.0	4	36.0	--	--
37. Expresses knowledge, beliefs, and opinions when necessary	11	100.0	--	--	9	82.0	2	18.0	--	--
38. Communicates with supervisor	11	100.0	2	18.0	8	73.0	1	9.0	--	--
40. Follows oral instructions accurately	11	100.0	4	36.0	4	36.0	3	27.0	--	--

*Percentages based on number of soldiers rated for task.

Table 7. Reading and Writing Tasks (N=11)

Task or Skill	Total Observed No.	Pct.	Better than most soldiers No.	Pct.*	As well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Not as well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Performs inadequately No.	Pct.
Reading										
18. Reads warnings, markings or indicators printed on weapons or other items used to carry out job tasks	10	91.0	1	10.0	9	90.0	--	--	--	--
19. Reads and understands field and training manuals when necessary	11	100.0	1	9.0	9	82.0	1	9.0	--	--
20. Reads words on scales or gauges	9	82.0	--	--	9	100.0	--	--	--	--
21. Identifies needed information in tables or charts	10	91.0	1	10.0	8	80.0	1	10.0	--	--
22. Reads posted notices, warnings, and bulletins	11	100.0	1	9.0	10	91.0	--	--	--	--
39. Follows written instructions accurately	11	100.0	3	27.0	8	73.0	--	--	--	--
Writing										
23. Fills out forms	10	91.0	1	10.0	8	80.0	1	10.0	--	--
24. Marks equipment or areas with appropriate labels	6	55.0	1	17.0	5	83.0	--	--	--	--

*Percentages based on number of soldiers rated for task.

Table 8. Overall Job Performance and Communicative Competence (N=11)

Task or Skill	Total Observed No.	Pct.	Better than most soldiers No.	Pct.*	As well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Not as well as most soldiers No.	Pct.	Performs inacequately No.	Pct.
41. Please rate this soldier's overall job performance										
a. compared to other non-native English speakers:	11	100.0	7	64.0	3	27.0	1	9.0	--	--
b. compared to other native English speakers:	11	100.0	4	36.0	6	55.0	1	9.0	--	--
42. Please rate this soldier's language competence:										
b. How well does he or she speak English compared to all other non-native English speakers?	11	100.0	5	46.0	3	27.0	3	27.0	--	--
c. How well does he or she speak English compared to all other native English speakers?	11	100.0	--	--	7	64.0	2	18.0	2	18.0

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Findings from Language Activity Ratings

Supervisors' ratings of a small sample of soldiers supported the interview data. Ten supervisors completed the Language Activity Rating in which they rated the performance of 11 enlisted personnel. This discussion excludes five tasks because fewer than six supervisors reported observing the soldier carry them out.

Tables 6 through 8 provide detailed results of the supervisors' ratings. Table 6 shows supervisors' ratings of soldiers on oral communication tasks. According to these ratings, soldiers were somewhat better at understanding English than at tasks involving speaking English. While over one-third of the soldiers were rated as "better than most" on following oral instructions (item 40), over one third were rated as not performing as well as most soldiers on tasks involving speaking and being understood (items 1, 4, 7, 8, 10, and 36). At least 60 percent were rating as performing "as well as most" or better on oral communication, and more (at least 80 %) were rated this way on reading and writing tasks, as shown in Table 7. Finally, the ratings in Table 8 indicate that over half of the soldiers performed at least as well as most soldiers in overall job performance and communicative competence.

Overall, the ratings indicate that these soldiers performed somewhat better on reading and writing tasks than on oral communication tasks. They also tended to do better at following oral and written instructions than at performing other tasks requiring English skills. Finally, producing clear, understandable English was more difficult for some soldiers than listening to and understanding English.

General Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The two major evaluation questions that guided the evaluation were: (1) What English language ability is needed for success as an officer or enlisted member? and (2) Is English language preparation adequate? General findings and conclusions that relate to these questions, based on interviews and supervisors' ratings, are presented below. These are followed by recommendations for administrators and others who are involved in implementing English training programs for non-native English speaking Army personnel.

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Information from interviews and supervisors' ratings showed that while non-native English speaking service members were relatively competent and well-educated in their native language, some found that deficiencies in English ability interfered with their overall job performance. There was general agreement that English proficiency was crucial for the success of non-native English speaking service members.

Especially important for officers and enlisted members were conversational skills; it was believed by those in the evaluation that correct pronunciation was important for both groups, and that English pronunciation was often difficult for non-native English speakers. Many non-native speakers also indicated that they had problems understanding different American accents or dialects, as well as understanding some of the colloquial English used in the Army.

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The knowledge of English and even the ability to speak it were felt by some Army personnel to be insufficient to bring about communication. Other factors that appeared to inhibit some non-native speakers' ability to communicate were a lack of confidence and a fear of being laughed at because of their English. This concern was felt especially by enlisted personnel. Thus, having the confidence to risk speaking English in different situations, especially when doing so might elicit negative reactions, was viewed as important.

Is English Language Preparation and Screening adequate?

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